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Pavak

Jonaraja Institute of
Genocide & Attrocities Studies

Symbolization & Misrepresentation

अपथ्याशीवबालः स सामन्तसहितस्ततः।
जनानाम जातिविध्वंसे सूहभट्टः कृतोद्यमः।।

- Pandit Jonaraja, Father of Genocide Studies

Pandit Jonaraja, the author of second Rajtarangini that follows the Rajtarangini of Kalhan, was a Kashmiri Shaivite Bhatta Brahmin. His real name was Jyotsanakar, meaning the creator of moonlight. This poetic name was true to his being. He was an exceptional and sensitive poet, well versed in history, astrology, Ayurveda, Yoga and subtler aspects of all these disciplines. He was a renowned Sanskrit scholar. His year of birth as per records available is estimated as 1389-90.

Like Kalhan he has written the history of Kashmir in poetry. But, that is not all about him. He has recorded the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in detail and delineated its aspects like the present day genocide scholars.

Jati-Vidhwans - This is the word Jonaraja has coined to describe genocide. He has defined genocide and Raphael Lemkin's definition which came in 20th century closely mirrors Jonaraja's definition. He has even pointed out the special intent that motivates the perpetrator and given a very sensitive and vivid account of how an ideology radicalises a regime and effects a total change in its mode of operation that leads to genocide. He has made it clear that the mind of a perpetrator is at a very low level of maturity. That is the view held by present day genocide scholars also. His account of the first exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, if placed in correct context, is no different from the atrocities the community faced in 1990.

Roots of the field of genocide studies are found in Pandit Jonaraja. He, in every sense is **"Father of Genocide Studies."**

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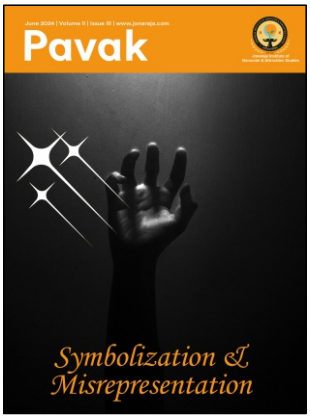

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False Symbolization and Genocide Denial

Symbols often become central to the identity and solidarity of survivor communities. They provide a means for survivors and descendants to connect with their heritage, acknowledge their losses, and assert their resilience in the face of trauma.

Sunanda Vashisht
Editor-in-Chief, Pavak

Symbolization in genocide studies refers to the process by which certain symbols, signs, or representations come to embody and communicate the collective identity, suffering, and memory of a targeted group that has experienced genocide. These symbols can include physical objects (like memorials, monuments, or artifacts), images (such as flags, logos, or emblems), or even gestures and rituals that carry deep cultural or historical significance for the affected community. For example, the "Never Again" slogan and the use of candlelight vigils are powerful symbols that evoke the memory of the Holocaust and other genocides, urging global action to prevent similar tragedies.

Importance of Symbolization in Genocide Studies:
Memory and Commemoration: Symbols serve as tangible reminders of the atrocities committed during genocide, preserving the memory of victims and the historical truth of what occurred. They play a crucial role in ensuring that future generations remember and learn from past atrocities.

Identity and Solidarity: Symbols often become central to the identity and solidarity of survivor communities. They provide a means for survivors and descendants to connect with their heritage, acknowledge their losses, and assert their resilience in the face of trauma.

Educational Tool: Symbols help educate the broader public about genocide and its impact. They serve as visual and emotional points of reference that can evoke empathy, deepen understanding, and promote dialogue about the causes and consequences of mass violence.
However, Genocide can be misrepresented too through symbolization in several ways:
Trivialization or Commercialization: Symbols associated with genocide may be used inappropriately or trivially, such as in marketing, fashion, or entertainment. This can dilute the seriousness and historical significance of the symbols, reducing them to mere decorative or profit-driven elements. For instance, the swastika, a symbol originally associated with auspiciousness in many cultures, was appropriated by the Nazi regime and has since become universally recognized as a symbol of hate and genocide. Its misuse in contexts unrelated to its historical significance dilutes the gravity of its meaning and can offend survivors and their descendants.

Misinterpretation of Symbols:
Symbols that are deeply meaningful to survivors and affected communities may be misinterpreted or misrepresented by those who are not familiar with their historical context. This can lead to misunderstandings or inadvertent offense.

Cultural Appropriation:
Symbols of genocide can be appropriated by groups or individuals who are not directly affected by the genocide, using them out of context or for their own purposes without understanding or respecting the suffering associated with them.

Manipulation of Symbols for Political Agenda:
Symbols of genocide may be exploited or manipulated for political purposes, either to provoke emotional reactions, justify controversial policies, or rally support for specific causes. This can distort the original meaning of the symbols and their historical significance. In Rwanda, the memorialization of the genocide against the Tutsi has been fraught with political tensions, with different groups interpreting and using symbols in ways that align with their narratives and interests. This manipulation can distort historical truths, sow division, and hinder efforts toward national unity

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and reconciliation.

Neglecting the Complexity of Genocide:

Using symbols alone can oversimplify the complex realities of genocide, reducing them to easily recognizable images or icons without addressing the broader historical, social, and political contexts in which genocide occurs. For example, in the case of the Armenian Genocide, Turkey's government has historically denied the genocide and actively suppressed the use of symbols and commemorations related to it. Such actions not only undermine efforts to acknowledge historical injustices but also hinder the healing and reconciliation processes for affected communities.

Genocide denial is a sinister phenomenon where historical facts and the memories of atrocities are deliberately distorted, minimized, or outright denied. One insidious tactic used in this denial can be false symbolization, where symbols associated with genocide are manipulated or misrepresented to undermine the truth and perpetuate a false narrative.

Genocide denial often begins with the manipulation of symbols that are deeply meaningful to the affected communities. These symbols, whether they are physical memorials, cultural artifacts, or commemorative events, serve as vital anchors for remembering the victims and acknowledging the horrors they endured. However, perpetrators and their sympathizers may distort or suppress these symbols to obscure the reality of genocide and perpetuate their version of history.

One of the most striking examples of genocide denial through false symbolization is the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Despite overwhelming historical evidence and scholarly consensus, Turkey has long denied the genocide, often employing false symbolization tactics. For instance, the Turkish government has appropriated historical symbols and monuments associated with Armenians, such as churches and cultural sites, while simultaneously erasing or altering their Armenian identity. By rebranding these symbols as Turkish or claiming they represent a different historical narrative, Turkey attempts to obscure the Armenian Genocide's reality and suppress acknowledgment of its responsibility.

Similarly, in Rwanda, the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 has seen efforts at denial through false symbolization. The government's official narrative has sought to downplay ethnic divisions and emphasize national unity, often at the expense of recognizing the genocide's ethnic dimension. Memorials and symbols commemorating the genocide have been carefully controlled and manipulated to promote a sanitized version of history that avoids confronting the country's painful past.

False symbolization in genocide denial serves several insidious purposes. Firstly, it undermines the legitimacy of survivor testimonies and historical documentation by creating a parallel narrative that seeks to confuse and deceive. By distorting symbols associated with genocide, perpetrators and their supporters seek to cast doubt on the established historical record and diminish the suffering of victims. This tactic not only perpetuates harm to survivors and their descendants but also hinders efforts toward justice, accountability, and reconciliation.

Moreover, false symbolization in genocide denial exacerbates intergenerational trauma and perpetuates cycles of violence and injustice. By erasing or manipulating symbols that acknowledge past atrocities, societies risk repeating historical injustices and failing to learn critical lessons from the past. This denial also undermines efforts to build trust and promote healing within divided communities, as acknowledgment and memorialization are essential steps toward fostering empathy, understanding, and reconciliation.

False symbolization is a dangerous tool used in genocide denial to distort historical truth, minimize the suffering of victims, and perpetuate harmful narratives. Whether through appropriation, erasure, or manipulation of symbols associated with genocide, perpetrators and their sympathizers seek to rewrite history and evade accountability. Recognizing and countering these tactics are crucial steps toward honoring the memory of victims, upholding truth and justice, and preventing future atrocities. By confronting genocide denial and affirming the integrity of symbols that bear witness to historical injustices, societies can strive toward a more just and compassionate world where the lessons of the past are remembered and respected.

While symbolization is essential in genocide studies for preserving memory, fostering identity, and educating society, it is vulnerable to misuse and misinterpretation. It is crucial to approach symbols of genocide with sensitivity, respect, and a commitment to understanding their complex meanings within their historical and cultural contexts. By doing so, we can uphold the integrity of these symbols as meaningful representations of profound human experiences and ensure they serve as vehicles for remembrance, justice, and reconciliation.

The Misrepresentation of Genocide Victims through Symbolization

Memory and commemoration play critical roles in shaping how genocide victims are symbolized. Memorials, museums, and commemorative events are central to the process of remembering and honoring the dead.

Tito Ganju
Chairman, JIGAS

The atrocities of genocide have left deep wounds on humanity, with countless lives lost and communities destroyed. However, the memory and representation of these victims can often be distorted through the use of symbols and narratives that do not capture the full extent of their suffering.

The Symbolization of Genocide Victims

In many cases of genocide, victims are symbolized through particular images or narratives that simplify their experiences and fail to convey the complexity of their suffering. These symbols can range from memorials and monuments to specific phrases or symbols associated with the atrocities. While these symbols can serve as powerful reminders of the horrors of genocide, they can also limit our understanding of the victims' experiences.

Symbolization is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides a means to memorialize and honour the victims, ensuring that their suffering is not forgotten. On the other hand, it can reduce complex human experiences into simplistic representations. For instance, the Holocaust is often symbolized by images of concentration camps and the yellow Star of David, which, while evocative, do not encompass the full breadth of Jewish life and suffering during that period.

Selective Focus in Symbolization

One aspect of misrepresentation is the selective focus on certain aspects of the victims' experiences while minimizing or excluding others. This selective focus can lead to a one-dimensional portrayal of victims that does not capture the full range of their identities, struggles, and resilience. For example, in the representation of the Armenian Genocide, the focus often rests on the mass killings and forced marches, overshadowing the cultural and social destruction that accompanied the physical atrocities.

Moreover, these simplified narratives can overshadow the individual stories within these genocides. The collective suffering becomes a monolith, where the personal experiences of victims and survivors are lost. This not only does a disservice to those who lived through these horrors but also to future generations who might seek to understand their own histories and identities through these narratives.

Political and Ideological Motivations

The use of symbols may often be driven by political or ideological motivations, which can further distort the representation of genocide victims. For example, certain symbols may be co-opted by governments or groups to advance a particular agenda, resulting in a skewed interpretation of history that serves the interests of the powerful while silencing the voices of the marginalized.

In Rwanda, for instance, the genocide is often symbolized by the image of machetes and mass graves. While these symbols accurately depict the brutality of the violence, they can also be used to reinforce political narratives. The Rwandan government has used the genocide to unify the nation under a single narrative, which, while fostering national unity, can also suppress dissenting voices and complex historical truths.

Memory and Commemoration

Memory and commemoration play critical roles in shaping how genocide victims are symbolized. Memorials, museums, and commemorative events are central to the process of remembering and honoring the dead. However, these acts of commemoration can also contribute to the

Symbolization is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides a means to memorialize and honour the victims, ensuring that their suffering is not forgotten. On the other hand, it can reduce complex human experiences into simplistic representations.

Education plays a crucial role in how we understand and remember genocides. Curricula that rely too heavily on symbols and simplified narratives can contribute to the misrepresentation of genocide victims. It is essential for educational materials to provide a comprehensive view of genocides, incorporating diverse perspectives and personal stories to enrich students' understanding.

misrepresentation of victims if they rely too heavily on symbols that do not fully convey the complexity of the genocide.

The Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, for instance, is a powerful symbol of remembrance. Yet, its abstract nature has been criticized for not fully conveying the personal stories and human faces behind the atrocity. The memorial's design, while evocative, may leave visitors with a sense of detachment rather than a deeper understanding of the individual lives lost.

Intergenerational Trauma and Collective Memory

The misrepresentation of genocide victims through symbolization can have profound implications for intergenerational trauma and collective memory. When victims are reduced to simplified symbols or narratives, the legacies of trauma and resilience that are passed down through generations may be overlooked or distorted. This can lead to a disconnect between the lived experiences of survivors and their descendants and the ways in which their histories are represented and remembered.

For example,

The Kashmiri Pandit genocide, marked by the targeted killings and mass exodus of the Pandit community from the Kashmir Valley in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is a stark example of how the misrepresentation of genocide victims through symbolization can distort their experiences. The use of the term "migrants" to describe the Genocide victim displaced Kashmiri Pandits trivializes the brutality they faced and obscures the reality of their forced displacement. By framing them merely as migrants, the narrative shifts away from the violence, intimidation, and terror that drove them from their homes, effectively downplaying the severity of their suffering and the loss of their ancestral homeland. This misrepresentation not only diminishes the acknowledgment of their trauma but also impacts the preservation of their memory and the recognition of their plight in the broader discourse on human rights and justice.

The descendants of Holocaust survivors often grapple with the dual identity of carrying the trauma of their ancestors while living in a world that may not fully understand or acknowledge the depth of that trauma. Simplified symbols and narratives can fail to capture the ongoing struggles of these communities, leading to feelings of isolation and misunderstanding.

Perpetuating Victimhood

Misrepresentation through symbolization can perpetuate a sense of victimhood or martyrdom that may not fully capture the complexities of survivors' identities and experiences. By framing victims solely through the lens of suffering and victimhood, we risk overlooking their agency, resilience, and capacity for resistance in the face of unimaginable atrocities.

This is evident in the representation of indigenous communities affected by genocide, such as the Native American populations in the United States. Often depicted solely as victims of colonial violence, these communities' rich cultures, histories of resistance, and ongoing contributions to society are overshadowed. This not only diminishes their full humanity but also impacts how they are perceived and treated in contemporary society.

The Role of Education

Education plays a crucial role in how we understand and remember genocides. Curricula that rely too heavily on symbols and simplified narratives can contribute to the misrepresentation of genocide victims. It is essential for educational materials to provide a comprehensive view of genocides, incorporating diverse perspectives and personal stories to enrich students' understanding.

Incorporating survivor testimonies, literature, and art created by those affected by genocide can help provide a more nuanced understanding. For example, the inclusion of Elie Wiesel's "Night" in Holocaust education provides a personal, harrowing account that goes beyond the symbols and statistics, offering a deeper connection to the human experience of genocide.

Media Representation

The media also plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of genocide victims. News coverage and documentaries that focus solely on the most graphic and shocking aspects of genocide can contribute to a skewed understanding. While it is crucial to highlight the severity of these crimes, it is equally important to provide context and depth to the stories being told.

Media representations can also perpetuate stereotypes and biases. For instance, the portrayal of African genocides often focuses on images of chaos and brutality, reinforcing negative stereotypes about the continent. This not only misrepresents the victims but also contributes to a broader misperception of African nations and peoples.

The Ethics of Representation

The ethics of representing genocide victims through symbols and narratives is a complex issue. It involves

balancing the need to remember and honour the victims with the responsibility to portray their experiences accurately and respectfully. This requires a critical examination of the symbols and narratives we use and a commitment to listening to and amplifying the voices of survivors and their communities.

One ethical consideration is the involvement of survivors and their descendants in the creation of memorials and educational materials. Their perspectives and experiences are invaluable in ensuring that representations are accurate and respectful. Engaging with these communities can also provide insights into how they wish to be remembered and honored.

Moving Towards Inclusive Representation

Addressing the misrepresentation of genocide victims through symbolization requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the complexities of their experiences. This involves re-evaluating existing symbols and narratives, creating more inclusive and comprehensive representations, and ensuring that the voices of survivors and their descendants are heard and respected.

Recommendations for Better Representation

Inclusive Memorials: Memorials and monuments should involve the input of survivors and their descendants to ensure that they accurately reflect the experiences and wishes of those they honour. This can include incorporating personal stories and diverse perspectives into the design and narrative of the memorial.

Comprehensive Education:

Educational materials should go beyond symbols and provide a comprehensive view of genocides. This includes incorporating survivor testimonies, literature, and art, as well as addressing the cultural, social, and political contexts of the genocides.

Media Responsibility:

The media should strive to provide balanced and in-depth coverage of genocides, highlighting both the severity of the crimes and the resilience and agency of the victims. This involves moving beyond sensationalist images and focusing on telling the full story.

Engaging Survivors:

Survivors and their descendants should be actively involved in the creation of educational and commemorative materials. Their perspectives and experiences are crucial in ensuring that representations are accurate and respectful.

Ongoing Dialogue:

There should be an ongoing dialogue about the representation of genocide victims, involving historians, educators, media professionals, and the affected communities. This can help to ensure that representations remain accurate and respectful as new information and perspectives emerge.

The misrepresentation of genocide victims through symbolization is a complex issue that requires careful consideration and a multifaceted approach. By acknowledging the limitations of symbols and striving for more inclusive and comprehensive representations, we can honor the memory of the victims more accurately and ensure that their stories are remembered and understood by future generations. This involves re-evaluating existing symbols, creating more inclusive narratives, and ensuring that the voices of survivors and their descendants are heard and respected. Through these efforts, we can work towards a more accurate and respectful commemoration of those who have suffered and perished in genocides.

Critical Genocide Studies and the concept of Jātividhvaṃsa

We may take the state representation of the Kashmiri Pandit genocide victims. They are officially called "migrants." There are many representational problems with this word. The word "migrant" eliminates the process and context behind the migration.

Dr. Dileep Kumar Kaul
Director, JIGAS

After a genocidal event, representations begin to pour in. Victims, perpetrators and the state, frame their representations of the event while as journalists, local and international come up with their representations. What are representations? Seen from genocidal perspective representations are symbolizations of tragic experiences. These symbolizations created at community or individual levels may exclude or include some important things. For example we may take the state representation of the Kashmiri Pandit genocide victims. They are officially called "migrants." There are many representational problems with this word. The word "migrant" eliminates the process and context behind the migration. It draws our attention the mere migration, and just eliminates the local ideologies, historical processes and memories that worked behind the forced migration. When the local ideologies are eliminated, the phenomenon of genocide, the Muslim perpetrator and the atrocities committed over a period of six centuries are very conveniently brushed under the carpet. So, the word "migrant" is not the representation of the victims of genocide, but of the hegemony of the state power, that can reduce a genocidal situation to a benign migration, with no perpetrator, no victim and no atrocities. "Migrant" is a representation that has remained the same since 1990 despite the regime changes. This shows that the state can create representations that may conceal the truth and make things convenient for the regime.

Genocide scholar Alexander Laban Hinton provides a critical genocide studies perspective for such situations. He has very aptly commented that it is in a specific context and moment of time that the term "genocide" emerged. We may miss many things when we use the term "genocide" in different contexts. What is the meaning of the genocidal violence in a particular context? Is it the same for every context? Can the word "Genocide" be the representation for any situation of group annihilation, in any socio-cultural perspective? For a real understanding of genocide, we have to use local lenses. When we talk of local lenses, we cannot move forward without the examination of the process of nomenclature of the phenomenon of group annihilation termed as "Genocide" by Raphael Lemkin. In his autobiography "Totally Unofficial" Lemkin has explained the thought process behind this nomenclature. The word "Genocide", as is often explained by genocide scholars, is a hybrid word made from two words—Greek genos (race, tribe) and Latin cide (killing). But that was not how Lemkin thought about it. Lemkin says that the operative word in "Genocide" is genos which is the basic unit of the society that enabled man to develop his socio-cultural aspects. Lemkin talks about the presence of genos in three ancient cultures—Roman, Greek and Sanskrit, where it is the same basic enlarged family unit, carrying the conscience of a common ancestor. This ancestor was real in the beginning and with the passage of time became a part of the imagination of the group. It is in the genos that the specific spirit and way of life of the group developed whether in Greek, Roman or Arian (Lemkin's usage) societies. Sanskrit genos is the genos of Arian (society. It is the word janaḥ used

Genocide scholar Alexander Laban Hinton provides a critical genocide studies perspective for such situations. He has very aptly commented that it is in a specific context and moment of time that the term "genocide" emerged. We may miss many things when we use the term "genocide" in different contexts. What is the meaning of the genocidal violence in a particular context? Is it the same for every context? Can the word "Genocide" be the representation for any situation of group annihilation, in any socio-cultural perspective?

for a collective of people in Sanskrit. Lemkin connected genos to three ancient cultures Lemkin attempted to give the word "Genocide" a universal context and meaning. But while talking about the origins of the word "Genocide" no genocide scholar talks about Sanskrit genos. They just talk about Greek genos. This explains the Eurocentric bias of the genocide scholars.

The concept of Jātividhvaṃsa given by Pandit Jonaraja in his Rājataraṃgiṇī transcends this Eurocentric bias. He examines the phenomenon of Genocide from a totally Indic, Sanskrit perspective. Here is how Suhabhatta, the minister of Sikander Butshikan unleashes genocide on people:

Apathyāśīva bālaḥ se sāmantasahitastataḥ.
Janānāṃ jātividhvaṃse sūhabhaṭaḥ kṛtodyamaḥ.605

Suabhatta, like a child who may eat non-edible things came with his aides and unleashed jātividhvaṃsa on Janās. Janā is the equivalent of genos, Sanskrit genos that Raphael Lemkin took as a basis to coin the word genocide along with Greek and Roman genos. So Jonaraja also talks about the genos of non-Muslim Kashmiris that is under threat from the Muslim invaders. This spirit lies in the nomenclature of Lemkin also who was talking from an experience-near perspective of holocaust. The spirit of genos is at the core of nomenclature of both Lemkin and Pandit Jonaraja. The concept of genos taken by Lemkin,cannot be without jāti, that is, the ethnoreligious identity of a group of people. Pandit Jonaraja talks about Janānāṃ jāti, the ethnoreligious identity of the people, in this verse. The meaning of Jāti is made clear in the following verse:

Jātidhvaṃse mariṣyāmo dvijeṣviti vadatsvatha.
Jātirakṣānimittiṃ sa tāndurdaṇḍamajigrahata. 606

The Brahmins made an appeal that Jātidhvaṃsa, the destruction of Jāti, will kill them. To enable their Jātirakṣā, the security of their Jāti, a fine was imposed on them. This fine clearly is Jazia, the penalty to be paid by non-Muslims to ensure the continuity of their ethnoreligious identity. Jātidhvaṃsa in Jonaraja's terminology is the destruction of ethnoreligious identity. This is what genocide means in the context of Kashmir. The term Jātidhvaṃsa does not only provide a historical context to the phenomenon of genocide in Kashmir, it also gives a specific linguistic context to it. UNCG has its international significance but Jātidhvaṃsa is what Kashmiri Pandit victims of genocide understand from the genocidal situations in Kashmir.

Jāti cannot exist without a place. Ethnoreligious continuity is the biographical continuity of a community at a place. Here we cannot forget the definitional problem that has always been there in the field of genocide studies. Scholars generally give definitions through an experience-distant perspective. Genocide has not been experienced by most of the genocide scholars. Jonaraja gives the definition of Jātividhvaṃsa with a place-specific perspective. This challenges the limits of Eurocentric definitions, the universal, rigid idiom of which serves to ignore the local colours of genocide in various parts of the world. It becomes imperative to facilitate a critique of the non-Indic definitions most of which are governed by holocaust idiom and thus do not address the historical victimhood of the sufferers of genocide in small places like Kashmir.

Jāti, the ethnoreligious identity that is nurtured by the place in which the carriers of the ethnoreligious identity dwell, gives rise to a place-based behaviour, that is characteristic of the people dwelling at place. This has been called deśācāra, the ācāra (behaviour) of a deśā (place) by Pandit Jonaraja. Here is the defining verse:

Marudbhiriva vṛkṣāṇāṃ śālināṃ śalabhairiva.
Kaśmīradeśācārāṇāṃ dhvaṃso'tha yavanaiḥ kṛtaḥ. 575

As a storm uproots trees, and locusts destroy a crop of rice the yavanas (Muslims) destroyed the Deśācāra (the place-oriented behaviour, the lived life) of the place that is Kashmir.

In this definition Jonaraja defines Jātividhvaṃsa (genocide) through metaphors. Quoting research from cognitive sciences Alexander Laban Hinton in his famous write-up on critical genocide studies says that people think about phenomena like genocide through metaphor. Jonaraja uses metaphors from his environment, the local natural context of his place, and these metaphors show what Jātividhvaṃsa means to him. The definition placed in local environmental and linguistic (Sanskrit) context provides a critique of universalised UNCG and scholarly definitions that govern the field of genocide studies.

Here Jonaraja talks about the destruction of Deśācāra of Kashmir which in essence is the lived life at a place. While giving the term Jātividhvaṃsa, he talks about the destruction of the ethnoreligious identity of a community. The ethnoreligious identity(Jāti) of a community flourishes in the dwelling place of the community. This identity is constituted

The Brahmins made an appeal that Jātidhvaṃsa, the destruction of Jāti, will kill them. To enable their Jātirakṣā, the security of their Jāti, a fine was imposed on them. This fine clearly is Jazia, the penalty to be paid by non-Muslims to ensure the continuity of their ethnoreligious identity. Jātidhvaṃsa in Jonaraja's terminology is the destruction of ethnoreligious identity. This is what genocide means in the context of Kashmir. The term Jātidhvaṃsa does not only provide a historical context to the phenomenon of genocide in Kashmir, it also gives a specific linguistic context to it.

In state and intellectual circles 1990 is considered as the central point of time from which genocide of Kashmiri Pandits emerges. 1990 has been framed as if nothing happened before this year and there had always been an atmosphere of co-existence in Kashmir. That is not how the process of genocide originates, matures and reaches its pinnacle. The concept of Jātividhvaṃsa questions 1990 as the representation of genocide. While explaining this concept in his Rajatarngini, Jonaraja analyses the mindset of the perpetrators, the experience of atrocities by the victims and their resilience and the emergence of the phenomenon of rescue.

by interaction of the dwellers with the place. The sum total of the collective action and thought of the dwellers at a place creates Deśācāra of the place. So the destruction of Jāti (Jātividhvaṃsa) is the destruction of Deśācāra of a place.

What is the process of this destruction of Deśācāra? As explained in the above verse it is like a storm uprooting the trees(destruction of root) and locusts destroying a rice crop (destroying the branches). This shows that the destruction of the lived life at a place is root and branch destruction. This is what Jonaraja means by Jātividhvaṃsa. In genocide studies, root and branch genocides are those events of group annihilation by another group that are aimed at all sections of the victim population—females, males of battle age, old men and children. This meaning is of course caried by destruction of Deśācāra that is synonymous with Jātividhvaṃsa. But it also gives the meaning of the destruction of cultural roots and thwarting the expansion of branches in every possible way. So Jātividhvaṃsa is a very meaningful representation of genocidal activity carried out in the context of the place that is Kashmir.

As we turn our focus on Jonaraja's account of the experience of atrocities by the victims and their responses during the process of Jātividhvaṃsa, it is apt to stop and consider another representation of genocide in Kashmir. This representation is the year 1990. In state and intellectual circles 1990 is considered as the central point of time from which genocide of Kashmiri Pandits emerges. 1990 has been framed as if nothing happened before this year and there had always been an atmosphere of co-existence in Kashmir. That is not how the process of genocide originates, matures and reaches its pinnacle. The concept of Jātividhvaṃsa questions 1990 as the representation of genocide. While explaining this concept in his Rajatarngini, Jonaraja analyses the mindset of the perpetrators, the experience of atrocities by the victims and their resilience and the emergence of the phenomenon of rescue. The following verse is about Suhabhatta who was a Brahmin and had converted to Islam. This verse is of utmost importance to understand the perpetrator mindset that is specific to Kashmir:

Turuṣkadarśane bhaktyā natu dveṣeṇa sa dvijān.
Vyaplāvayadataścāsmin hatvā na prajagalbhire. 670

It was due to his devotion towards Turuṣkadarśana (Islam) that he persecuted Dwijas, the Brahmins otherwise he bored no malice towards them. The absence of malice did not let him get any sense of sin of murder. A complex socio-psychological situation has been depicted in this verse:

1. Suhabhatta is devoted to Turuṣkadarśana that is Islam. It is his newly acquired ideology after he converted to a new religion.
2. He bore no malice towards Brahmins because he had been one of them.
3. As he bore no malice, the murder and persecution of Brahmins did not evoke any feeling of guilt or sin in him.

What we gather from this verse is that for whatever reasons Suhabhatta had converted to Islam he indeed was a victim of Jātividhvaṃsa. Conversion was the loss of ethnoreligious identity, to preserve which some Kashmiri non-Muslims were not lured by the benefits granted for conversion and some were paying the penalty of Jazia so that they could follow their Dharma. There were traders like Simhabhatta and Kastuta, who rejected any rewards for conversion and did not convert. People were all praise for them. (verse 608, Rajtaragini). Nirmalacharya was another such committed man who gave up everything including the favours from the state as if it was a spike of grass in hand. But he did not allow hisJāti to be polluted:

Nirmalācāryavaryaḥ sa sarvasvaṃ tṛṇavatkṣaṇā
Tyajana rājaprasādena na jātiṃ svāmadūṣayat. 610

But Suhabhatta allowed his Jāti to be polluted, under the influence of newly acquired Islamic philosophy. He forgets his Jātividhvaṃsa, and works to convert or destroy other members his previous non-Islamic Jāti. From a victim he turns into a perpetrator. Then he targets other members of the victim community of which he was a member. The devotion towards his newly acquired religious philosophy he forgets his victimhood and becomes a perpetrator. All converts under the devotion towards Turuṣkadarśana have to consider it their duty to convert others through any means including Jātividhvaṃsa. Each conversion is the addition of a perpetrator. This is chain-reaction perpetratorhood, specific to places like Kashmir. The intent is clear, the same intent that is inherent in this situation was witnessed always in Kashmir, including in 1990 through the warning—raliv, chaliv ya galiv (convert, flee or die). The power of this chain reaction Perpetratorhood is evident in Kashmir now. Kashmir is almost 100% Muslim now when about six centuries ago it was 100% Hindu.

Jātividhvaṃsa is unleashed in every sphere of lived life. Deśācāra is destroyed step by step. Employment to get bread and butter is the basic element of Deśācāra. About four years back a prominent news network "Epilogue" made a

documentary on Kashmiri Pandit genocide. The title of the documentary was—Denial of Genocide akin to Double Genocide. Quoting from a book "Where will it End" by M. L. Kaul, the documentary underlined a startling fact about Sheikh Abdullah, the towering leader of Kashmir. In 1980 Sheikh Abdullah went to Calcutta. Some local Kashmiri Pandits met him to discuss the situation of Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir. He told the in plain words that education and the population strength of Kashmiri Muslims could not be ignored and it is for this reason that Kashmiri Pandits could not be given employment in Kashmir. Only Kashmiri Muslims could be get employed in Kashmir. It is clear that Shiekh Abdullah did not want to grant economic base in government services to Kashmiri Pandits. About Six hundred years back, Suhabhatta unleashed the economic aspect of Jātividhvaṃsa with the same mindset:

Vicchetumicchatā vidyāṃ tenāpahṛtavṛttibhiḥ.
Laḍitaṃ prativeśmāgre piṇḍīlobhād dvijaiḥśvavat. 669

Suhabhatta wanted to destroy the tradition of knowledge the upholders of which were Kashmiri Pandits. The knowledge tradition of Kashmir is integral to Deśācāra of Kashmir. To destroy the tradition of knowledge and its propagation, upheld by Kashmiri Pandits (Non-Muslims) Suhabhatta usurped the jobs they did to earn their bread and those jobs were of teachers who imparted knowledge. without any jobs the Brahmins had nothing to eat and stood in front of houses so that someone may come out and give them a morsel of bread. This aspect of Jātividhvaṃsa is the same from Suhabhatta to Sheikh Abdullah.

Idols are the representations of divine powers for many aboriginal cultures. Kashmir had many temples full of beautiful idols of deities. The same idols are toxic entities if seen through the lens of Turuṣkadarśana, the Islamic philosophy. Idols were a part of Deśācāra of Kashmir and as destruction of Deśācāra is synonymous with , Suhabhatta felt relieved after breaking idols of deities as if he was cured of a serious ailment (verse 604) In 1990 and after that many temples and idols were broken in Kashmir. Again an example of Jātividhvaṃsa continuing through centuries.

As the destruction of Deśācāra continues it becomes difficult to live at the dwelling place and the victims begin to leave the place. Jonaraja gives an account of this situation during the times of Suhabhatta:

Gṛhāddhūmyeva viprāṇāṃ paṃktirjātyabhimāninī.
Ruddhadvārāttato deśādapamārgairapāsarat. 662

The Brahmins who took pride in their Jāti, their ethnoreligious identity left their place like the smoke going out from homes, through odd paths because the main paths were blocked by the soldiers of Suhabhatta. This situation can be easily compared with the situation of 1990. When the victims after leaving their homeland reached a land, the environment of which they were not used to this happened:

kṣmā rūkṣā kṣāmamaśanaṃ vyāyāmo vedanāmayaḥ.
jīvannarakatā teṣāṃ videśo'gād dvijanmanām. 664

ghāṭīphaṇīndrabhītīvratāpasvalpāśanāturaiḥ.
mārge'nekairdvijairmṛtyulābhāt sukhamalabhyata.665

kvaca snānaṃ kvaca dhyānaṃ tapaḥ kvaca japaḥ kvaca.
bhikṣārthamaṭatāṃ grāmānagāt kālo dvijanmanāma.666

Dry earth, non-nutritious food, painful lodgings made the life of Brahmins a living hell. In their journey to escape annihilation they always had the fear of being attacked by the perpetrators and snakes. High heat was unbearable for them and for many of them death came as relief. When they reached the place of their refuge they could not decide where to offer prayers and where to do meditation, where to chant hymns and where to offer penance. Most of the time of Brahmins was spent in roaming through villages to get some alms. The situation of refugee camps in 1990 rushes back into our memory. A 600 years old situation is almost equal to the situation of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990. This clearly implies that the process of Jātividhvaṃsa has been continuing in the same manner for the last 600 years. The concept of Jātividhvaṃsa decentralises 1990 as the central point of time when genocidal atrocities were unleashed. This concept is a critical tool that problematises the Eurocentric concepts of genocide. This concept makes it clear that genocidal experiences cannot be universalised. They are different at different places. That is why Palestenians who claim that they have been subjected to genocide call their genocide Naqba and Jews call their genocide Shoah. The concepts of Naqba and Shoah originated from different kinds of Deśācāra. Jātividhvaṃsa is what Kashmiri Pandits understand from genocidal activities unleashed on them and the term comes from a place specific Indic-Kashmiri Deśācāra. If we do not respect Deśācāra, a place and the lived life at that place, our understanding of genocide will always be caged in a Eurocentric, holocaust centric paradigm and that will never enable us to address the pain and suffering of genocide victims in different parts of the world with different Deśācāras.

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Illuminating the 10 stages of Genocide through Rywka's diary

Reproduced from Jewish Museum Milwaukee

RYWKA'S DIARY

"Oh, to write!... To be able to write, to make pen move on paper! I need to write." – Rywka Lipszyc (December 24th, 1943)

April is Genocide Awareness Month. It marks a number of anniversaries related to genocides that have occurred in the twentieth century. Research conducted by Dr. Gregory H. Stanton shows that there are ten documented stages of how it is possible for genocide to occur. **The "10 Stages of Genocide" are: Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination, and Denial.**

Stanton developed these stages to show that genocide cannot be committed by just an individual or small group, it must have the support of a state and the cooperation of a large group of people. These stages sometimes happen simultaneously and can continue over long periods of time. In order to prevent future genocides from happening, it is important that we familiarize ourselves with these ten stages and speak out when we recognize them happening.

The Ten Stages of Genocide are reflected clearly in the story of Rywka Lipszyc, a young girl who lived in the Łódź Ghetto during the Holocaust, and the subject of Jewish Museum Milwaukee's special exhibit "The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Łódź Ghetto." While living in the ghetto, Rywka kept a diary in which she recorded a moving testament of what life was like for an adolescent girl living through the Holocaust. Looking at the Ten Stages of Genocide through the writings found in the diary of Rywka Lipszyc makes the Holocaust feel more human. It gives a name and life to one of the millions of people who experienced this horrific genocide.

STAGE 1: CLASSIFICATION

The first stage is Classification. This stage is defined by separating groups of people by categories such as race, religion, or nationality, in order to create a mentality of "us and them." According to Stanton, the more segregated a society is the more likely they are to have a genocide.

On September 15th, 1935, the German Parliament passed the Nuremberg Race Laws, which defined Jews not by their religion, but as their own race. This was done to make Jews the "other" in German society.

Through the writings in her diary, it is clear that Rywka very much defined herself as a practicing Orthodox Jew and was proud of her heritage and religious tradition.

"But I do know that God will take care of me! Oh, it's good that I'm a Jewish girl, that I was taught to love God … I'm grateful for all this! Thank you, God." – *Rywka (February 2, 1944)*

STAGE 2: SYMBOLIZATION

The second stage is Symbolization. In this stage, symbols are given to the "other" to accompany the classifications of ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. These symbols are forced unwilling onto members of the minority group as a form of visual identification.

On September 1st, 1941, all Jews over the age of 6 were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David. These badges were used to stigmatize and humiliate Jews. They were also used as a form of segregation, control, and preparation for further stages.

This is one of the most striking examples of "symbolization." However, these types of laws were enacted early on in the Holocaust. For instance, in 1938 Jews were required to adopt the middle name Israel (for men) and Sara (for women) in order to identify them as Jews. Jews were also forced to carry registration cards that detailed their ancestry and their passports were stamped with a red "**J**".

Throughout her diary, Rywka understands that her place in society is the "other" and that she has no control over her own future. You can see this sentiment in the following quote:

"At this moment I'd like to do so much for the world. I see many, many defects and I feel so sorry that I can't find a place for myself. And when I realize that I don't matter in the world, that I'm just a speck of dust, that I can't do anything, at this moment, I feel much worse, I'm suffocating and I'm helpless…" – *Rywka (March 29, 1944)*

STAGE 3: DISCRIMINATION

The third stage is Discrimination. During this stage, the dominant group uses laws, customs, and political power to deny the rights of the minority. These groups are not given their full civil rights and often times are even stripped of their citizenship.

In 1935, German Jews were stripped of their citizenship. Jews were highly restricted from participating in public education. Many Jewish businesses were "Aryanized" and sold off to non-Jews.

Due to the wholistic discrimination facing the Jews during this time, religious beliefs were altogether disrespected by the German majority. Jews were forced to work on the Sabbath and holidays, and Rywka's reaction to this is illuminating.

"This day, this holy, sacred day, is for them an ordinary and normal weekday.[…] for me, going to the workshop on Saturday was a terrible agony. I thought involuntarily: If I have to do it again (I wish I wouldn't), will it become commonplace for me, will I get used to it? Oh, God, do something so I wouldn't have to go to the workshop on Saturday!" – *Rywka (February 20, 1944)*

STAGE 4: DEHUMANIZATION

The fourth stage is Dehumanization. In this stage, the dominant group treats the "other" group as second-class citizens. Those in the prosecuted group may be compared to animals, parasites, insects or diseases. According to Stanton, when the "other" is thought of as less than human, it is easier for the dominant group to gain control over them.

On April 1st, 1933, Nazi leadership staged an economic boycott of Jewish owned businesses and offices of Jewish professionals. Nazi soldiers stood outside stores and offices and shouted phrases such as: "The Jews are our misfortune!" In 1935, laws were put into place forbidding marriage between Jews and non-Jews, and in 1938, Jews were barred from all public schools and universities, as well as from cinemas, theaters, and sports facilities. The laws were clear; Jews were no longer considered human to their German counterparts.

"It hurts so much (for them we are not humans, just machines). Oh, pain! But I'm glad that I can "feel" that it hurts because as long as it hurts, I'm a human being. I can feel— otherwise it would be very bad." – *Rywka (February 17, 1944)*

STAGE 5: ORGANIZATION

The fifth stage is Organization. During this stage, plans for genocidal killings are made and armies or militias are armed and trained. According to Staton, genocides are often created by the state, but can also be organized informally. The Holocaust is a clear example of a state-organized genocide.

Nazi influence expanded throughout Europe during this stage. The SS, Gestapo, and Kripo (all forms of German guard) were being trained to enforce the laws within newly established Jewish ghettos. Concentration Camps were created in Nazi-occupied Poland. By 1941, Germany had annexed Austria, was occupying Poland and had attacked most of Western Europe.

"What's more, there is a new order by Biebow [the chief of German Nazi administration of the Łódź Ghetto] that those who will work fifty-five hours a week will receive a coupon (a half kilo [about 1 pound] of bread, 2 dkg [about ¾ ounce] of fat, 10 dkg [about 3.5 ounces] of sausage). Passes are not being issued and people are speeding up production. This coupon will take away more than it will bring." – *Rywka (December 13, 1943)*

STAGE 6: POLARIZATION

The sixth stage is Polarization. In this stage, the dominant group broadcasts propaganda that reinforces already established prejudice and hate. Laws are put in place that forbid social interaction between the two groups.

During this time, ghettos were widely established throughout European nations. Ghettos were enclosed districts that isolated Jews from the non-Jewish population and from other Jewish communities. Living conditions were miserable, people were put on starvation diets, and slave labor was the only means of survival. This stage is also when the Nazi party began talking about plans for "ethnic purification," a "final solution" to the Jewish problem in Europe.

Łódź Ghetto had the second-largest Jewish population in Poland after Warsaw. Rywka's life in the Ghetto was painful. Her family was deported one by one, and at times her sorrows became overwhelming.

"I can't give up! But who's thinking of giving up?… Oh, I feel that I'm sinking more and more into a swamp and mud… and… I can't get out… No! I won't let it happen! I'll do my best! But again I'm overwhelmed by exhaustion! Oh, how can I stop it? Who can help me? This ghetto is a terrible hell." -*Rywka (February 23, 1944)*

STAGE 7: PREPARATION

The seventh stage is Preparation. During this stage, leaders of the dominant group plan for the "final solution."

Euphemisms are often used to cloak their intentions, such as using terms like "ethnic purification" or "counter-terrorism" to disguise their goals. They indoctrinate the general population to fear the victim group. Slogans such as, "If we don't kill them, they will kill us," are often used by leaders in the dominant group.

On January 20th, 1942, the Wannsee Conference took place outside of Berlin. It was here that Reinhard Heydrich presented German officials and the Nazi party with a "final solution to the Jewish question." The "final solution" was a code name for the mass murder of European Jews.

During the Conference, Heydrich announced: "In large labor columns, separated by gender, able-bodied Jews will be brought to those regions to build roads, whereby a large number will doubtlessly be lost through natural reduction. Any final remnant that survives will doubtless consist of the elements most capable of resistance. They must be dealt with appropriately, since, representing the fruit of natural selection, they are to be regarded as the core of a new Jewish revival."

STAGE 8: PERSECUTION

The eighth stage is Persecution. In this stage, victims are identified and separated from society based on their ethnic or religious identity. They are deported to concentration camps and genocidal killings begin. According to Stanton, these killings are considered genocidal because they are carried out with the intention to destroy the victim group.

On January 16th, 1942, German authorities began deporting Jews from the Łódź Ghetto to Chelmno killing center. This mass deportation was known as the szerpa and included 70,000 Jews including Rywka's youngest siblings. In her diary, Rywka is often struggling with the devastation she feels over the loss of her family and guilt from being the one who survived the deportation.

"The szerpa! How many tragic memories, how much pain and longing, how much anxiety (I can't even enumerate all of them) are contained in this single word? Oh, God, how much horror? Just a single memory… and what if there's a szerpa again? Is it a szpera? Fortunately it's not, thank God, like the other time." – *Rywka (February 20, 1944)*

STAGE 9: EXTERMINATION

The ninth stage is Extermination. Extermination begins and becomes the mass killing known as "genocide." It is defined by Stanton as "extermination" by the dominant group because they do not see the victim group as being fully human.

From August 9th to 28th, 1944, SS and local police liquidated the Łódź Ghetto and deported all but 877 Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camps. The 175,000 Jews that once lived in the Łódź Ghetto had all been deported.

Rywka and her remaining family were a part of this final deportation. However, the last entry in her diary is dated before this deportation in April 1944. The reason she stopped writing is unknown.

"We are in darkness… somebody is pushing us… and pushing… we can't resist… and we're sinking… and we're getting stuck… God, help us get out!!!! Unfortunately, help isn't coming yet. Who knows if it's going to come in time?" – *Rywka (February 24, 1944).*

STAGE 10: DENIAL

The tenth stage is Denial. In this stage, the perpetrators dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, cover up evidence and intimidate witnesses. They deny that any crime was committed and place the blame on the victims. While they are still in power, the dominant group blocks the investigations of their crimes and continue to govern until they are driven out by force. Once they are no longer the governing power, they flee into exile.

Holocaust denial is the attempt to deny and/or change the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany against Jews and other groups during the Holocaust. According to a 2018 study conducted by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 11% of US adults haven't heard of the Holocaust or were not sure if they had heard of it. The study also found that 11% of US adults found it to be acceptable for an individual to hold Neo-Nazi views.

Lack of Holocaust education is the leading cause of Holocaust denial. That is why Holocaust diaries, such as Rywka's, are so important and must continue to be experienced. These diaries give names and faces to the 6 million that perished in the Holocaust.

Rywka Lipszyc's diary was found by Zinaida Berezovskaya, a Red Army soldier, in the spring of 1945 outside of the crematoria in liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau. It remained hidden for nearly 70 years after its discovery. It was published in 2014.

"The improbable survival of Rywka Lipszyc's diary is in many ways a metaphor for the inextinguishable spark of Jewish life. Through this moving account, we are reminded that 6 million is just a number, to which we are all too numbed."– Daniel Gordis, Koret Distinguished Fellow, Shalem College, Jerusalem

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